2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

782 washed entrails, together with a small bamboo container
787 filled with the goat's blood, was placed on the ground in
789 front of the altar. The old man and woman now chanted as
[622] before, after which the meat was taken away and distributed to all present under the supervision of the village Mandal, or head-man. The goat was offered first to Konchen and then to all the other spirits. During the whole of this celebration none of the spectators, of which there must have been fifty or sixty, paid the slightest attention to what was going on. As we later noticed, this was the case on all such occasions: the people merely sat round drinking and talking; but I did hear a child reproved for making too much noise while the actual chanting was in progress.

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491 If one takes the night mail from Calcutta it is easily possible, by motoring from Siliguri, to reach Gangtok, the capital of independent Sikkim, well before lunch on the following morning. The motor road at present ends at Gangtok, but the Talung Valley can be reached the following evening by any moderately active walker. The actual distance is about twenty-five miles; but included in this is a descent of nearly three thousand feet, immediately followed by an ascent of like amount. This drop and subsequent rise is repeated again at the end of the journey, but fortunately on a smaller scale. If really in a hurry it would be possible to reach the Talung in something under thirty-six hours from Calcutta; but having crossed the rickety suspension bridge across the Teesta, the sole means of access to the valley, one steps backward in time, so to speak, into another world. In
● 181 Calcutta (said to be the second city in the British Empire; but in my opinion an easy first in dirt and squalor) Englishmen, and others, toil all day in a vile climate for the sole purpose of acquiring more wealth than their fellows: but in the Talung Valley, which has meadows as green as any in Europe, and some of the finest mountain scenery in the world, money is considered of little importance, and one man

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

as good as another. Although the two places are so near in terms of modern travel, in everything else Talung is thousands of years behind, looked at, that is, from what our unhappy machine-age (but actually slave-driven) civilisation is pleased to regard as progress. Talung has neither drains nor electric light; nor, more fortunately, any newspapers; but its inhabitants are happy and, all things considered, contented. A few, a very few, of the people had heard vague and distorted rumours of the Great War (that which did not end war): none, however, so far as I know, had heard of India's new constitution, nor even of King George the Sixth, and the day of the Coronation passed unnoticed, except in so far as it was a fine day and so permitted a full day's work in the fields.

My first view of the Talung was in the spring of 1936, on the way to Everest. We did not enter the valley since our road lay straight through Sikkim to the plains of Tibet, and there was no time for excursions off the route. But from Singhik bungalow one looks right up the valley to Kinchinjunga at its head, one of the most spectacular sights in the whole Himalaya. But on this occasion we did not see the mountain, which was hidden in cloud, and the valley itself looked grim and uninviting, with patches of winter snow still lying in the shadier parts of the higher slopes. When we returned in July the valley was deep in mist and filled with small clouds which looked like floating wads of cotton-wool; but even at this distance many shining patches of emerald cultivation were clearly visible on the steep hillsides, although we could see no villages.

During the previous autumn I had been staying in Nepal, hoping, amongst other things, to get permission to round off my ethnological studies of the people (which I had been pursuing intermittently for years) by a stay of some months in an actual Gurkha village. My proposals proved unacceptable to the Maharaja, who found it impossible to make any exception to the rule, laid down by his predecessors and never once relaxed, by which no European is permitted to

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

157 An attentive examination of the Lepcha in one respect entirely contradicts our preconceived notions of a mountaineer, as he is timid, peaceful, and no brawler; qualities which are all the more remarkable from contrasting so strongly with those of his neighbours to the east and west: of whom the Ghorkas are brave and warlike to a proverb, and the Bhotanese quarrelsome, cowardly, and cruel. A 112 group of Lepchas is exceedingly picturesque. They are of short stature—four feet eight inches to five feet—rather broad in the chest, and with muscular arms, but small hands and slender wrists.* The face is broad, flat, and of eminently Tartar character, flat-nosed and oblique-eyed, with no beard, and little moustache; the complexion is sallow, or often a clear olive; the hair is collected into an immense tail, plaited flat or round. The lower limbs are powerfully developed, befitting genuine mountaineers: the feet are small. Though never really handsome, and very womanish in the cast of countenance, they have invariably a mild, frank, and even engaging expression, which I have in vain sought to analyse, and which is perhaps due more to the absence of anything unpleasing, than to the presence of direct grace or beauty. In like manner, the girls are often very engaging to look upon, though without one good feature: they are all smiles and good-nature; and the children are frank, lively, laughing urchins. The old women are thorough hags. Indolence, when left to themselves, is 131 their besetting sin; they detest any fixed employment, and their foulness of person and garments renders them disagreeable inmates: in this rainy climate they are 088 supportable out of doors. Though fond of bathing when

[441] * I have seldom been able to insert my own wrist (which is smaller than the average) into the wooden guard which the Lepcha wears on his left, as a protection against the bow-string: it is a curved ring of wood with an opening at one side, through which, by a little stretching, the wrist is inserted.

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Though fond of bathing when
they come to a stream in hot weather, and expert, even admirable swimmers, these people never take to the water for the purpose of ablution. In disposition they are

LEPCHA GIRL AND BHOODIST LAMA.

amiable and obliging, frank, humorous, and polite, without the servility of the Hindoos; and their address is free and unrestrained. Their intercourse with one another and with Europeans is scrupulously honest; a present is divided equally amongst many, without a syllable of discontent or grudging look or word: each, on receiving

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

his share, coming up and giving the donor a brusque bow and thanks. They have learnt to overcharge already, and use extortion in dealing, as is the custom with the people of the plains; but it is clumsily done, and never accompanied with the grasping air and insufferable whine of the latter. They are constantly armed with a long, heavy, straight knife,* but never draw it on one another: family and political feuds are alike unheard of amongst them.

The Lepcha is in morals far superior to his Tibet and Bhotan neighbours, polyandry being unknown, and polygamy rare. This is no doubt greatly due to the conventual system not being carried to such an excess as in Bhotan, where the ties of relationship even are disregarded.

Like the New Zealander, Tasmanian, Fuegian, and natives of other climates, which, though cold, are moist and equable, the Lepcha's dress is very scanty, and when we are wearing woollen under-garments and hose, he is content with one cotton vesture, which is loosely thrown round the body, leaving one or both arms free; it reaches to the knee, and is gathered round the waist: its fabric is close, the ground colour white, ornamented with longitudinal blue stripes, two or three fingers broad, prettily worked with red and white. When new and clean, this garb is remarkably handsome and gay, but not showy. In cold weather an upper garment with loose sleeves is added.

A long knife, with a common wooden handle, hangs by the side, stuck in a sheath; he has often also a quiver of poisoned arrows and a bamboo† bow across his back. On his right wrist is a curious wooden guard for the

* It is called "Ban," and serves equally for plough, toothpick, table-knife, hatchet, hammer, and sword.

† The bamboo, of which the quiver is made, is thin and light: it is brought from Assam, and called Tulda, or Dulwa, by the Bengalees.

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7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

generous disposition, keep the wallet of the Bijooa always full.

Such are some of the prominent features of this people, who inhabit the sub-Himalayas, between the Nepalese and Bhotan frontiers, at elevations of 3000 to 6000 feet. In their relations with us, they are conspicuous for their honesty, their power as carriers and mountaineers, and their skill as woodsmen; for they build a waterproof house with a thatch of banana leaves in the lower, or of bamboo in the elevated regions, and equip it with a table and bedsteads for three persons, in an hour, using no implement but their heavy knife. Kindness and good humour soon attach them to your person and service. A gloomy-tempered or morose master they avoid, an unkind one they flee. If they serve a good hills-man like themselves, they will follow him with alacrity, sleep on the cold, bleak mountain exposed to the pitiless rain, without a murmur, lay down the heavy burden to carry their master over a stream, or give him a helping hand up a rock or precipice—do anything, in short, but encounter a foe, for I believe the Lepcha to be a veritable coward.* It is well, perhaps, he is so: for if a race, numerically so weak, were to embroil itself by resenting the injuries of the warlike Ghorkas, or dark Bhotanese, the folly would soon lead to destruction.

Before leaving the Lepchas, it may be worth mentioning that the northern parts of the country, towards the Tibet frontier, are inhabited by Sikkim Bhoteeas † (or Kumpas),

* Yet, during the Ghorka war, they displayed many instances of courage: when so hard pressed, however, that there was little choice of evils.

† Bhote is the general name for Tibet (not Bhotan), and Kumpa is a large province, or district, in that country. The Bhotanese, natives of Bhotan, or of the Dhurma country, are called Dhurma people, in allusion to their spiritual chief, the Dhurma Rajah. They are a darker and more powerful race, rude, turbulent, and Tibetan in language and religion, with the worst features of those people exaggerated. The various races of Nepal are too numerous to be alluded

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

a mixed race calling themselves Kumpa Rong, or Kumpa Lepchas; but they are emigrants from Tibet, having come with the first rajah of Sikkim. These people are more turbulent and bolder than the Lepchas, and retain much of their Tibetan character, and even of that of the very province from which they came; which is north-east of Lhassa, and inhabited by robbers. All the accounts I have received of it agree with those given by MM. Huc and Gabet.

Next to the Lepchas, the most numerous tribe in Sikkim is that of the Limboos (called "Chung" by the Lepchas); they abound also in East Nepal, which they once ruled, inhabiting elevations from 2000 feet to 5000 feet. They are Boodhists, and though not divided into castes, belong to several tribes. All consider themselves as the earliest inhabitants of the Tambur Valley, though they have a tradition of having originally emigrated from Tibet, which their Tartar countenance confirms. They are more slender and sinewy than the Lepchas, and neither plait their hair nor wear ornaments; instead of the ban they use the Nepal curved knife, called "cookree," while for the striped kirtle of the Lepcha are substituted loose cotton trousers and a tight jacket; a sash is worn round the middle, and on the head a small cotton cap. When they ruled over East Nepal, their system was feudal; and on their uniting against the Nepalese, they were with difficulty dislodged from their strongholds. They are said to be equally brave and cruel in battle, putting the old and weak to the sword,

to here: they are all described in various papers by Mr. Hodgson, in the "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal." The Dhurma people are numerous at Dorjiling; they are often runaways, but invariably prove more industrious settlers than the Lepchas. In the Himalaya the name Bhotan is unknown amongst the Tibetans; it signifies literally (according to Mr. Hodgson) the end of Bhoto, or Tibet, being the eastern extreme of that country. The Lepchas designate Bhotan as Ayeu, or Aieu, as do often the Bhotanese themselves. Sikkim, again, is called Lhop, or Lho', by the Lepchas and Bhotanese.